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# How WIC Helps



## Eating for You & Your Baby





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Being pregnant or breastfeeding a baby is a big job. And the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children, known as WIC, is here to help you.

### ► **WIC May Be Able To Help You If:**

- You are pregnant or have recently given birth, and
- You have a low income or no income, and
- You have a nutrition or health problem

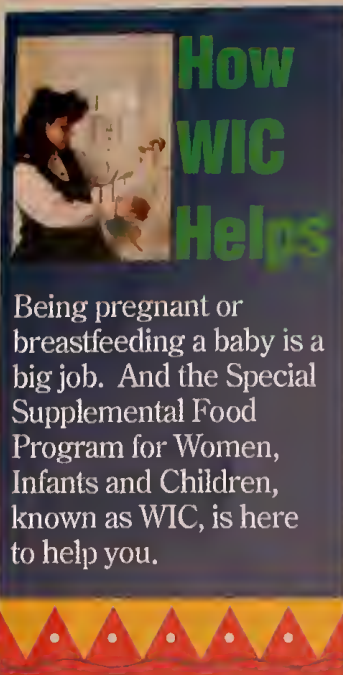
Call your local health department to see if you are eligible to receive WIC Program benefits.

### ► **WIC Provides At No Cost To You:**

- Nutritious foods to supplement your diet, and
- Information on healthy eating, and
- Referrals for health care







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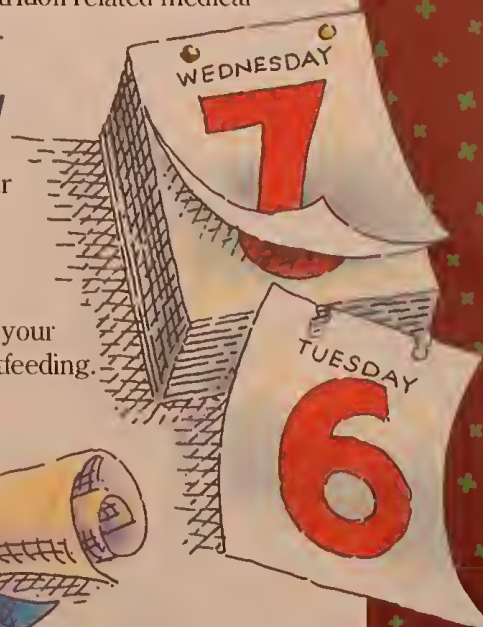
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- Information on healthy eating, and
- Referrals for health care

### ► Everyone Who Is Eligible May Not Get WIC Benefits

- Sometimes your local WIC agency may not have the funds to serve everyone who is eligible. When this happens, WIC serves applicants according to a priority system.
- Under the priority system, pregnant women, breastfeeding women, and infants who have a nutrition-related medical problem receive WIC benefits first.

### ► Length Of Time You Can Stay On WIC

- **If you are pregnant:** During your pregnancy and up to 6 weeks after your baby is born.
- **If you are postpartum and breastfeeding:** Up to 1 year after your baby is born if you continue breastfeeding.
- **If you are postpartum and not breastfeeding:** Up to 6 months after your baby is born.



### ► Graduation From The WIC Program

- WIC provides short-term benefits for you and for your baby during critical times of growth and development.
- WIC teaches you how to choose and prepare nutritious and affordable foods. The information you get from WIC will help you choose healthy foods

for yourself and your family throughout your entire life.

- WIC encourages you and your baby to get regular health care.
- If you eat your WIC foods and follow the advice of the WIC nutritionist, your nutrition and/or health should improve. Then, you can graduate from the program in a short period of time—healthier and smarter.



# Why WIC Is Important



- ▶ When you are pregnant or breastfeeding, you and your baby need certain nutrients. The only way your growing baby gets nutrients to build healthy muscles and bones and other body tissues is from you and the foods you eat.
- ▶ What you eat can make the difference in your health and your baby's birth weight. Good nutrition also protects against health problems.
- ▶ If you are a teenager, your body is still growing while your baby is developing inside you. Eating the right foods will help both you and your baby to develop and grow.
- ▶ The WIC food package does not provide all the foods you and your baby need. It supplements the foods you buy. The WIC staff can help you plan to make healthy choices for yourself and your family.
- ▶ WIC can also refer you and your baby for medical care.







## HOW SOME IMPORTANT NUTRIENTS WORK FOR YOU AND YOUR BABY

Nutrient	What it does
Carbohydrates	Provide energy. Help the body make the best use of other nutrients.
Protein*	Helps to build and repair all body tissues. Helps form substances in the body that fight infection. Helps in the regulation of body functions. May be used to provide energy.
Fat	Provides energy. Carries fat-soluble vitamins. Needed for healthy skin.
Vitamin A*	Promotes growth and development. Needed for healthy skin. Also protects against infection and is important for normal vision.
Vitamin C*	Helps to maintain blood vessels, bones, teeth, and muscles. Aids in iron absorption. Helps the body resist infection.
Folate	Helps the body form red blood cells and aids in the formation of genetic materials within every body cell.
B-Vitamins	Help keep the nervous system healthy and help the body to function properly. Promote normal appetite and digestion. Help the body to use the energy in food.
Calcium*	Helps build and maintain strong bones and teeth. Helps muscles and nerves to function normally. Helps blood clot.
Iron*	Helps form and maintain blood cells. Helps protect against infection. Helps the body carry oxygen to cells.
Other Minerals	Perform many important functions throughout the body.
Dietary Fiber	Helps keep the digestive tract healthy.

\* WIC foods were specifically selected for these nutrients.

## Food Groups

Milk, Yogurt, & Cheese Group

Meat, Poultry, Fish, Dry Beans, Eggs, & Nuts Group

Vegetable Group

Fruit Group

Bread, Cereal, Rice, & Pasta Group

## WIC Foods and Their Nutrients

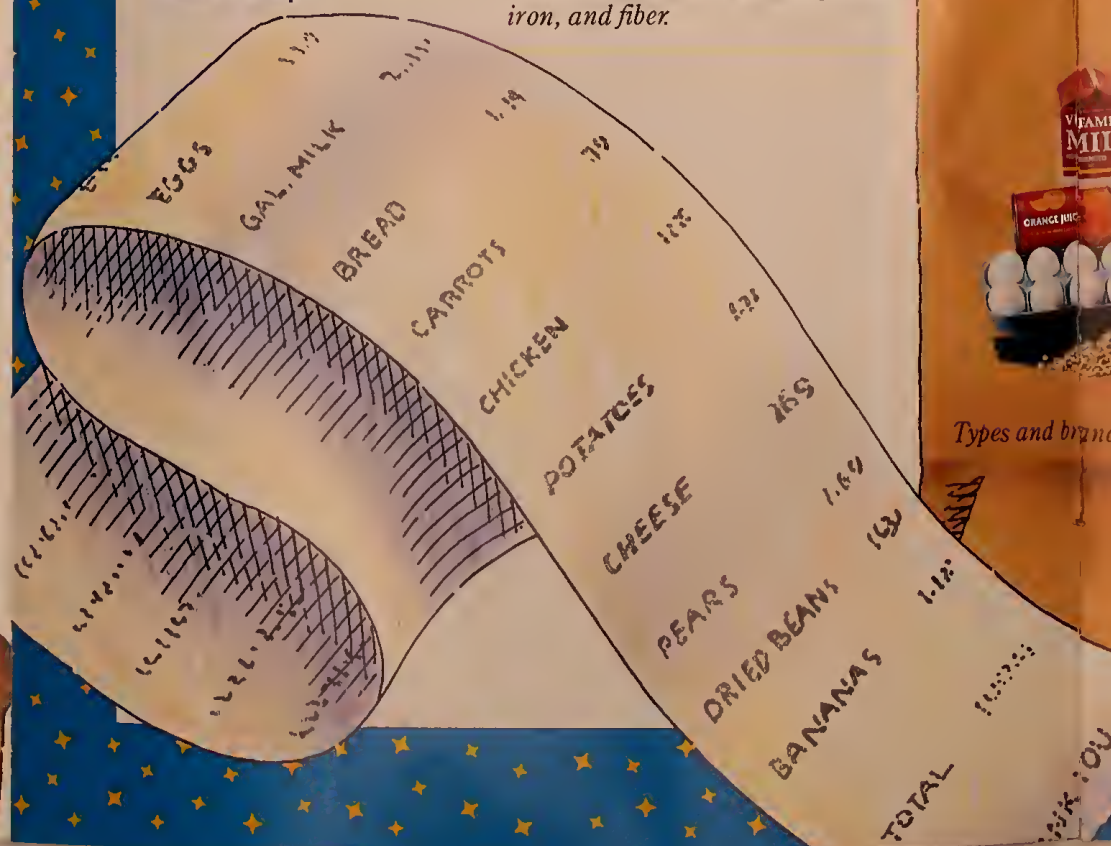
Milk and cheese provide calcium, vitamin A, and protein. They may also provide some fat.

Dry beans and peas, eggs, peanut butter, and tuna fish provide protein and minerals. Beans and peas are good sources of folate and fiber. Peanut butter and tuna fish also provide some fat.

Vegetable juices provide vitamin A, vitamin C, and minerals. Carrots provide vitamin A and fiber.

Juices provide vitamin C. Orange and grapefruit juices are good sources of folate.

Cereals provide complex carbohydrates, B-vitamins, including folate, iron, and fiber.



# WIC Foods



Types and brands of WIC foods will differ from State to State.

**W**IC provides certain foods from each of the five major food

groups. The WIC foods are good sources of some important nutrients. No one food gives you all the nutrients you need to stay healthy. So eat many different foods every day.

♦ If you are breastfeeding and your baby receives no formula from WIC, you may receive some extra foods. ♦ If you are homeless, tell the WIC staff.

They may be able to provide WIC foods that do not need cooking or refrigeration.



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# Breastfeeding Is Best

Breastmilk is the best food for babies. Breastfeeding gives babies the best start in life. The WIC Program encourages women to breastfeed.



## ► Why breastfeeding is so good:

- Breastmilk helps fight infections and delays allergies. Breastfed babies are sick less often.
- Breastmilk is easy for babies to digest so they have less diarrhea, constipation, and spitting up.
- Breastmilk is made just for babies. It has just the right balance of vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients needed for your baby to grow well.
- Breastmilk is always warm and ready to feed.
- Breastfeeding builds a special closeness between you and your baby.
- Breastfeeding helps your body get back into shape after pregnancy.





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If you are breastfeeding and your baby receives no formula from WIC, your food package may contain additional juice, cheese, and dry beans or peas. Your package may also contain tuna fish and carrots.



### ► What you need to do:

- Breastfeed often, both day and night, in the early months to have a good supply of breastmilk.
- In addition to breastmilk, you may begin feeding infant foods at 4 to 6 months of age.
- When infant foods are added, continue breastfeeding through at least the first year of your baby's life.
- Eat the same good foods that you ate while you were pregnant. You do not need to stop eating certain foods or eat a special diet.

Call the WIC staff if you need help. They know of other breastfeeding mothers and breastfeeding experts you can talk with.





# The Food Guide Pyramid



Use the Food Guide Pyramid to help you choose a healthy diet every day.

**W**hile you are pregnant or breastfeeding eat at least the following number of servings, daily:

- 3 servings from the milk group
- 2-3 servings from the meat group (for a total of 6 ounces)
- 4 servings from the vegetable group
- 3 servings from the fruit group
- 9 servings from the bread group

Use small amounts of fats, oils, and sweets (see the top of the Pyramid). This includes the fat, sugar, and oil contained in the foods you choose as well as the ones used in cooking or added at the table.

## What Counts as One Serving?

### Milk

1 cup of milk  
8 ounces of yogurt  
1½ to 2 ounces of cheese

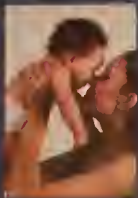


### Vegetable

½ cup of cooked vegetables  
1 cup of leafy, raw vegetables  
¾ cup of juice



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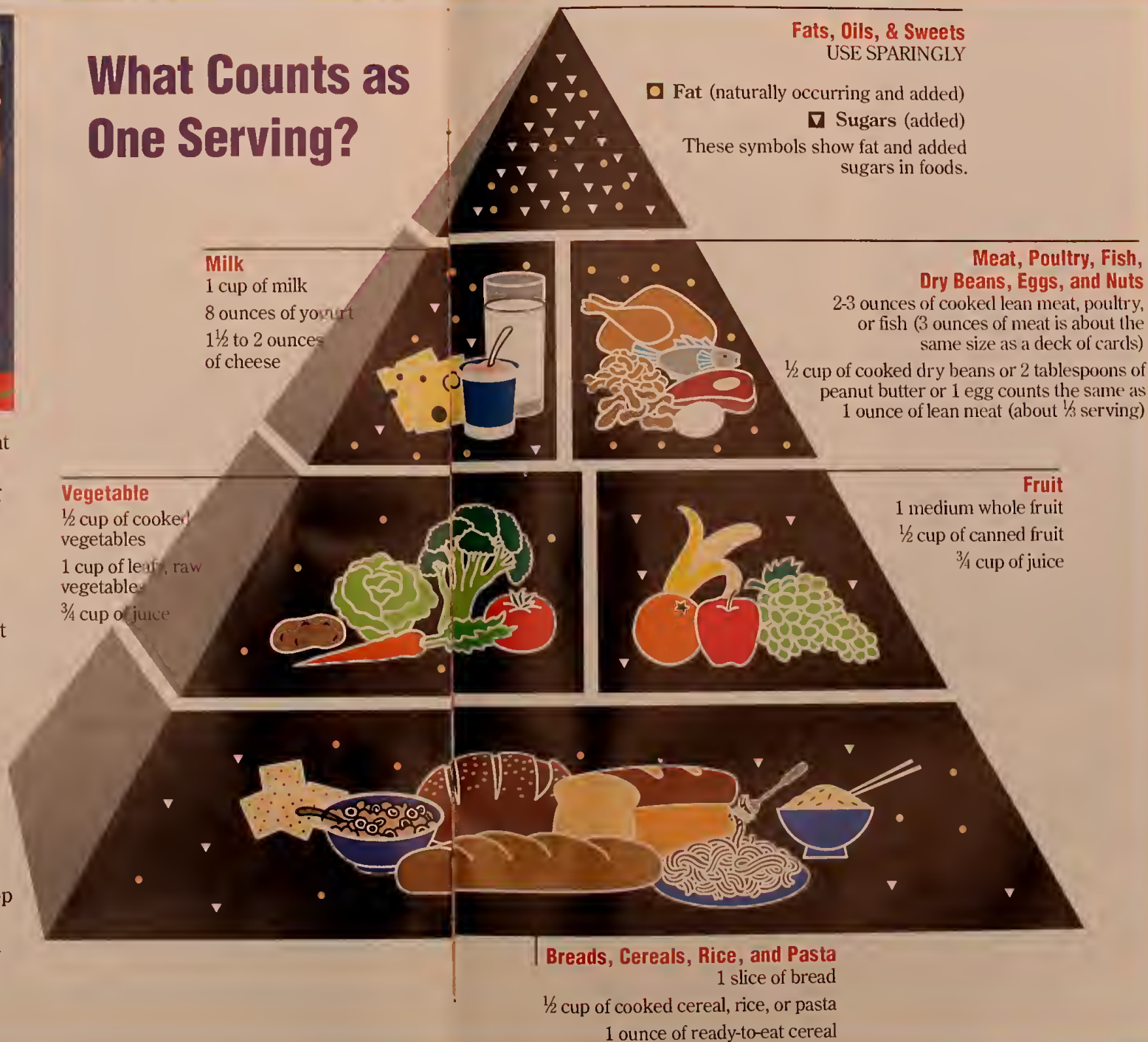
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## What Counts as One Serving?





# Alcohol, Tobacco, & Other Drugs

When you are pregnant, alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs can hurt your unborn baby.

- Don't use street drugs;
- Don't drink alcohol (beer, wine, wine coolers, liquor, or mixed drinks);
- Don't smoke cigarettes; and
- Don't take prescription drugs or over-the-counter medicine before asking your doctor.

## ► How do alcohol, tobacco, and street drugs harm your unborn baby?

- If you use street drugs, your baby may be born:
  - too early,
  - too small, or
  - too sick to live

If you use street drugs, stop now. Even if you use drugs only once in a while, your unborn baby can be harmed.

Quitting drugs any time in your pregnancy will help your baby. The sooner you quit the better.

- If you drink alcohol, your baby may be born with "fetal alcohol syndrome" called FAS. Babies with FAS:
  - are small,
  - are slow or mentally retarded,
  - have deformed faces, and
  - may have heart problems

Babies do not get over FAS. They have it for life. Choose not to drink while you are pregnant.

- If you smoke tobacco, or are around others who smoke, your baby could be born:
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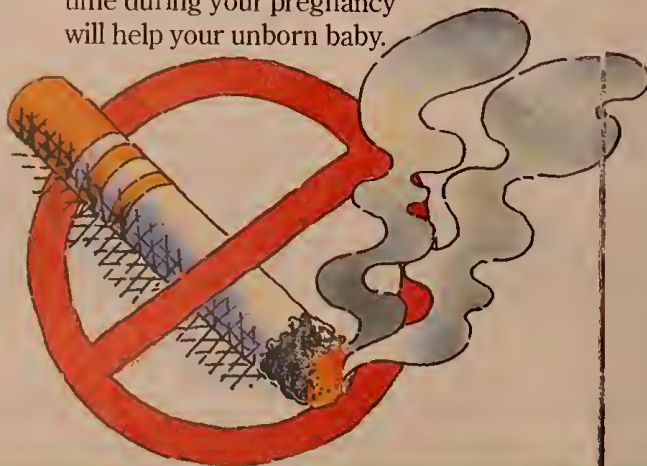
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After birth, keep your baby away from tobacco smoke. Babies and children who are around tobacco smoke have more colds, coughs, and ear infections.

- Some medicines can also harm your unborn baby. These may include drugs your doctor prescribed before you were pregnant. They also may include the non-prescription medicines you buy such as cold pills,

cough medicine, and aspirin. Check with your doctor before you take any medicines.

## ► If you need help to stop

Talk to someone in the WIC office, a doctor, or other health care or social service worker if you need help to stop using alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. They will know where you can go for help.

## ► Drug free means being a better mother, too

It is important to stay away from alcohol and street drugs after your baby is born. Your baby needs your love and attention. A mother who abuses alcohol or uses street drugs may not care for her baby properly. She may forget to feed, wash, and change her baby.



## ► Where To Get More Help

Other Federal programs may also be able to help you:

- **Food Stamp Program:** Helps families to buy foods they need for good health. Contact your local social services agency.
- **National School Lunch and Breakfast Program:** School-age children may be able to get meals free or at low cost. Contact the school principal.
- **Summer Food Service Program for Children:** Helps communities serve meals to needy children. Contact your State department of education.
- **Child and Adult Care Food Programs:** Many child care centers provide healthy meals. Contact your State department of education or health.
- **Aid to Families With Dependent Children (AFDC):** Provides extra money to low-income families with children in times of need. Each State has different rules. Contact your local social services agency.
- **Health Care:**
  - In some areas, community health centers and migrant health centers give free or low-cost health and dental care. If you earn no money, the care is free. If you earn some money, you may pay a little for your health and dental care.
  - Each State has a program that pays medical costs for families with low income. Contact your local health department.
- **Community Programs:** Programs may also be available such as substance abuse treatment centers, food banks, and the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program. For information, ask your WIC local agency.

*The Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children is open to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, sex, national origin, age, or disability.*

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